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ABSTRACT

Approximately 200 residents new to the Seattle, Washington, metropolitan area were interviewed in a study to discover the interrelationships between information needs and newspaper use under conditions of dislocation. Five major areas of concern to new residents were identified (home, neighborhood, community, work, and leisure) and described in terms of "things," "activities," and "people." Preliminary analysis of the data was conducted with reference to the general effects of dislocation, the background characteristics of respondents, the severity of dislocation, newspaper use, and general media use. Results indicated that dislocation represents a critical juncture when people's need for and use of the newspaper is at one of its highest levels, and that useful information to the consumer can be defined as information on which behavior can be based. (AEA)

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WHY THEY READ

A Study of Information Needs and Newspaper Use[1]

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Non-readers among 18-35 year-olds are a growing concern to newspaper publishers both as potential subscribers and as an attractive and eminently saleable advertising audience. The problem, of course, is making a reader of a non-reader. When we approached this question for The American Newspaper Publishers Association, we expected to find a good deal of readership research that would direct our efforts. We found, however, that readership studies focus almost exclusively on what readers say they read or like to read. While such data is useful in determining what content to add or drop, it's of little assistance when the question is why people aren't reading in the first place.

Rather than adopt a research strategy that would focus on developing content parameters deemed attractive to a particular audience, we decided to direct our efforts to the study of newspaper "use." We saw the decision to "use" the newspaper as conditioned by a number of "others" that don't show very well in most readership research. We like to think of "use" as functional, related in some way to a perceived need for information or entertainment; "reading," on the other hand, may or may not be seen as a motivated behavior by the reader...or the researcher observing the reader. We felt that by seeking answers to the broader question of "why" people read in terms of the utilities they associated with the newspaper, we would be in a better position to assess non-readership. Accordingly, our research focus shifted from content to people, from readership profiles to reader profiles.

The shift from "what is read" to "why it is read" necessitated a shift in research method that would permit us to observe "use" under conditions when such use would be most probable. More specifically, we wanted to focus on people undergoing some major change in their lives when their need for re-orienting information would be high. At the same time, we wanted the newspaper to be a likely source of information enabling reorientation. Our focus on reader "use"

as a function of "information needs" was developed from Carter's theory of discontinuity which suggests heightened communication activity at "change" points or critical junctures in the person's life path (Carter, 1972, 1974).

Although traditional segmentation studies have been limited in content-based explorations of readership, they have produced several findings which suggest appropriate research directions.

For example, studies seeking to explain low-newspaper readership by teenagers (Bush, 1966-69) tell us something about what teenagers read, when they read at all. But they don't tell us why they do or don't read. Nor, of course, have such studies answered the same question for young adults, the audience segment of prime concern to newspapers.

Some readership findings can be analyzed to show striking differences in the way teenagers and adults "use" the newspaper (e.g., Clarke, 1969). They suggest that "use" of a communication medium is related to daily routine or life style, and that significant communication changes occur when there is discontinuity, as when the life style of a teenager shifts to that of a young adult. That is, these findings indicate that individuals do not become newspaper readers as a result of some kind of continuous process that begins in the teens. Thus, finding out how one age group "uses" the newspaper does not allow us to project how it is used by a subsequent age group.

A recent study supported by the American Newspaper Publisher's Association (ANPA) illustrates these points very well (Clarke, 1969). Clarke compared teenage and adult readership of "marginal" content (teen sections) and "central" content (usual news sections) and found some large differences between the two groups. But, "suprisingly" (to the researchers), teenagers did not read teen sections more avidly than adults. Nor did teenagers read teen sections more avidly than

they read the central content of the newspaper. The research revealed differences that could not be explained and that left newspaper publishers and editors with few ideas for improving teenage readership. Such findings have served to suggest that editors abandon efforts to attract teenage readers (Lyle, 1968).

Again, such findings suggest that expanded studies would be most helpful with respect to media use at the time when the individual's daily routine has been disrupted or changed in some significant way, as in the shift from teenage to young adult. At this point, communication activity--the use of information--should be at a peak, so the use of media is most likely to interact with a person's daily routine at this point. Also, if the newspaper is of no use to a person at a point of discontinuity, then it's very unlikely that it ever will be. The trick for the newspaper is to know enough about potential readers and changes affecting their lives to be able to use shifts in daily routines as opportunities to intersect with the individual's path.

This suggested focusing on a kind of discontinuity that is a common enough occurrence to present a visible and useful opportunity for the newspaper...and observation. There are many such changes that come to mind--first job, changing jobs, marriage, becoming a parent, buying a home, becoming a citizen in a new community. It may also be fruitful to think in terms of major social changes with potential impact on the individual. For example, the change toward increased leisure has been (and still is) "disrupting" people's daily routines by leaving them with time to fill. Time that might be filled by reading the newspaper.

It also seemed productive to examine when and how an individual uses a communication medium such as the newspaper as an efficient replacement for other forms of information gathering which involve transport or physical movement. (Not unlike the Yellow Pages' ad "let your fingers do the walking".) The indi-

vidual is likely to let his eyes do the traveling rather than his body. The newspaper is a handy substitute for physical movement, and current energy trends suggest the industry might exploit this potential systematically.

As a means of expanding the research contest, we shifted to examination of a specific form of discontinuity in terms of the related concepts of "life spaces." Rather than segments of audiences, we have examined segments of personal situations or life spaces. Rather than segments of content, we sought segments of communication needs and uses or services. These were studied under conditions of discontinuity.

This was a sharp shift in several ways, including the significant change to considering respondents as potential customers or clients for communication services rather than just as consumers of media content.

We chose a time to study when we expected the need for communication services, and thus the potential for media uses, would be high. This timing centered on a certain kind of discontinuity which we call dislocation. At times of severe dislocation, we expected (hypothesized) that people would have a great many communication needs related to disconnecting and reconnecting within various life spaces.

The dislocation examined was the move from one community to another. There are many other forms of discontinuity, but we expected this physical dislocation to be high in communication and media use potential for several reasons.

1. The amount of discontinuity was expected to be high because of the potential for dislocation concern in a number of different life spaces: home, neighborhood, community, work, leisure.

2. Dislocation represents a major opportunity for newspapers not only because of the high mobility of persons in the 21-34 age group, but also because the newspaper has capabilities to be useful in ways that don't overlap with other media. No other medium can offer the same amount of information on community life--shopping, entertainment schedules, schools, etc. (Katz, et al., 1973).

3. There is some isolated evidence from two previous studies indicating that media use does increase in conjunction with physical dislocation. A study of students just entering college found increased use of all media in ways related to the change (McCleneghan, et al., 1973). For example, the students used newspaper want ads heavily to locate jobs, housing, roommates, etc. They used radio and television not for information but to fill empty time segments created by relocation.

   In another study, changes in newspaper circulation were successfully predicted from relocation (Ruggels, 1966). Ruggels found that relocation within a county predicted circulation loss, indicating that movement within a circulation area may produce problems in retaining readers. On the other hand, movement into a circulation area predicted circulation gain--identifying an opportunity to recruit new readers.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

The site selected for the study was the Seattle Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA). This location was selected because of the availability of a large population concentration in which a sufficient number of new residents could be located, and because it is a media market with two major dailies. The major dailies in the area are the Seattle Times with a circulation of 214,232, or 43.5% coverage, and the Seattle Post-Intelligencer with 144,186 circulation, or 29.2% civerage, Since there is nine percent overlap in distribution, the combined circulations of the two major dailies covers 63% of the households in the SMSA.

Population mobility in the area was more than adequate to meet sampling needs, according to U.S. Census Bureau figures for the 1965-70 period. During the five-year period net in-migration was 67,740 persons for a rate of about 13,500 persons annually.

The overall study plan was to locate and interview 200 new residents within a few weeks of their arrival. For purposes of the study, a "new resident" was defined as a person who moved into the SMSA from outside--persons moving and relocating with the SMSA were not considered new residents.

The first phase of the study involved considerable pretest interviewing to ascertain major dimensions of the moving experience. In-depth personal interviews were conducted with 35 new residents most of whom were students who had recently enrolled at the University of Washington, but had not previously resided in the Seattle area. We discovered that relocating comprised a very significant problem for most of the pretest respondents, but highly focused questioning was required to elicit concerns other than the logistics of moving material possessions. Once we were able to effectively direct the interviews, we identified five major loci of concern: (1) the home, (2) the neighborhood, (3) the community, (4) work, and (5) leisure. In addition, each of these five loci could be described in terms of "things," "activities," and "people." This gave us a total of 8 dimensions of relocating that could be employed in assessing information needs and newspaper use.

Preparations for the field survey were begun in March, 1976. At this point, the development of an adequate sampling frame for new residents was a major problem. Contacts were made with local realtors, moving companies, schools, public utilities, newspapers, and service organizations (e.g., Welcome Wagon, and Newcomer's Club) to obtain listings of new residents. Our requests for such information were denied--even by the newspapers--on the basis that providing it violated the privacy of clients. It appeared, incidentally, that local newspapers had very limited information about new residents, and that this information was obtained from sources that did not wish to be identified.

As our first sampling frame, we used King County excise sales tax records for real estate sales in Seattle. It was possible to locate persons with out-of-town addresses who had recently purchased property in Seattle. Eight-seven candidates were located, but phone numbers could be obtained for only 10 of them,

and none of the 10 proved to be eligible for the study. This method was quickly abandoned.

Next, a sampling frame was developed by juxtaposing consecutive quarterly editions of the telephone company's reverse directory. Any new listing found in the most recent edition was considered a potential respondent. Listings were selected randomly on a block-by-block basis for screening.

The number of potential respondents located in this way was so low that every potentially eligible respondent was selected for further screening. One-hundred and thirty potential respondents were located, of which 15% actually proved to be eligible. Of these, interviews were completed with 12 persons.

Due to slow progress using the reverse directories, other sampling frames were continually being sought. In June we obtained access to the new voter registration listings of King County and screened them against phone listings. Twenty candidates were called from these daily listings. Of those called, 20% were interviewed for the study. The others were not eligible or could not be contacted. Also in June, 20 respondents were located through the Seattle Newcomers Club.

In July the State Motor Vehicle Licensing Bureau agreed to make their license plate applications available for screening. Over the next few months, 37,000 applications were screened to locate out-of-state titles, which would indicate a new resident to the Seattle area. Three-hundred forty-eight potential respondents were located in this way; 49% proved to be eligible for the study. All the remaining interviews (167) were located using this screening method.

The difficulties that we encountered in developing a sampling frame point to the inaccessibility of information on metropolitan in-migration. Such information would be essential to any program directed at recruiting subscribers from

among new residents. Neither of the Seattle dailies currently maintains comprehensive information on in-migration, yet the annual rate of in-migration would indicate recruitment of new residents is essential to maintaining and/or expanding circulation levels.

Interviews were initially conducted face-to-face by students recruited from communication research methods classes at the University of Washington. All interviewers had previous experience and participated in a two-hour training session given by staff of the Communication Research Center. Because of the extreme difficulty experienced in locating eligible respondents, most of the interviewers were not very productive. It became necessary to employ a separate staff just to screen for eligible respondents by telephone, and to arrange interview appointments. Eventually, we developed techniques whereby the interview schedule itself could be administered over the telephone. We found that interest in talking about the moving experience was so high that most respondents readily cooperated with a 25 minute phone interview. The time-consuming task of screening for eligible respondents, however, remained a problem throughout the study. In September it became necessary to employ members of the League of Women Voters to complete the interviewing.

The sample obtained was purposive and not a random sample, making estimation of sampling error impossible. Interviewers simply contacted all the persons on our list of potentially eligible respondents. Final determination of eligibility could not be made until the person was contacted by telephone. Efforts were made, however, to avoid gross over-representation of a particular population segment. Thus, we did not obtain large numbers of students, females, or elderly. The non-randomness of the sample limits its use as an actuarial description of the new resident population, but does not detract from the main purpose of the study, to describe interrelationships between information needs under conditions

of dislocation and newspaper use.

After interviewing was completed, preliminary analysis of the data was conducted to determine the dimensions to be employed for indexing severity of dislocation. Correlation matrixes were generated for each of the eight dimensions: home, neighborhood, community, work, leisure, things, people, activities. Between item correlations were most consistent within the first five dimensions, so separate indexes were developed for each dimension.

In subsequent analyses of interrelationships our primary objective was to provide a meaningful descriptive portrayal of the findings. For this reason, frequency distributions are reported rather than correlation coefficients. This was the most useful approach given the applied purpose of the research, and the limitations of our sample.

FINDINGS

General Effects of Dislocation

In our initial report to ANPA (Stamm, Jackson, Bowen, 1977), we reported strong and broad support for our basic hypothesis that dislocation provides an appropriate point at which to study newspaper use and subscribing among young adults.

At the time of moving into a new community, young adults are prime candidates to become newspaper users and subscribers. This survey showed that the young do a lot of moving and suggested that they are likely to change newspaper use and subscription behavior several times.

Among other findings, the survey revealed these patterns for young adults:

1. They need the newspaper and other communication services to cope with problems of dislocation.

2. The severity of their moves is translated into increased use of the newspaper and other media.

3. The severity of dislocation and newspaper use varies for different dimensions of their life space--home, neighborhood, community, work and leisure.

4. Their severity of dislocation and newspaper use behavior differs in some spaces from those of other age groups.

5. They are likely to either start or stop subscribing to a newspaper at this time.

Background Characteristics

The overall pattern of findings should be provocative to the newspaper industry, which seeks to increase using and subscribing among young adults, now the largest segment of our population.

Before discussing the focal variables of the study, we should note the high and continuing mobility among the young (which has been reported in many other contexts).

Within our total sample of 201, 92% had made a major move before! Most reported multiple moves (average 5.4) in their record.

Although no special effort was made to locate young adults, they made up nearly 69% of the total sample. Since the sample itself was located through a variety of means, the high mobility and dislocation patterns of the young was again demonstrated.

Employment was by far the most popular reason given for the move, with 46% stating they moved because of a transfer, changing jobs or seeking work. Family conditions, such as accompanying a spouse, were listed as the reason for the move by 18%. Since some of these family reasons were also job related, it seems that at least half of the respondents moved because of employment conditions. Another 11% of the total sample moved for educational reasons, primarily to attend college.

Since Seattle is the largest city in Washington with the greatest number of job possibilities, it is not surprising that 69% of the respondents had come from smaller communities. An even larger proportion, 85%, came from outside Western Washington.

Many of the findings held for all the respondents, but since young adults made up such a high proportion of the sample, these results are suggestive even when they are not age specific.

Severity of Dislocation

The severity of dislocation, as measured by both the number of concerns and the degree of concern, was considerable for all those surveyed. Across all there were distinctive patterns for certain parts of the life space.

Dislocation effects were slightly higher for work than the other spaces, with modal severity score of 7 on a scale of 10. There was the greatest variance or spread in severity of dislocation in the home space, and the most extremely high values in leisure space.

When young adults are considered separately, work again is the space in which the most concern was expressed. Nearly 70% had severity scores of 7 or above. In all the other spaces, severity peaked at 6 on the scale.

The middle-aged respondents had the "steepest" distributions, usually high peaks at the modal point.

Older respondents generally had rather flat curves, with a fairly even distribution across values. In the leisure space, for example, those 50 and over had a fairly even distribution on values 3 through 9.

The young adults had their most even distribution in the home space, with more than 75% scoring 5, 6, or 7 on the severity scale.

These results mean that younger and older age groups are more heterogeneous

than the middle-age group (35-49) in the severity of dislocation experienced with moving.

Newspaper Use

The severity of dislocation was translated into a fair amount of communicating, but not always directly into much newspaper use. (See Table 1.) Much of the communicating involved talking to other people about relocation concerns.

Newspaper use was highest by far for community concerns, where nearly 64% reported they utilized the paper "some", "fairly often", or "very often", for information or other material about Seattle and its institutions. More than 31% reported they used the paper "fairly often" or "very often" for community affairs.

This is an encouraging finding, since newspapers have traditionally held both their economic and subscriber support on a community base. Newspapers do the most comprehensive job of any of the media in covering the community, and this seems reflected in the high use for this area.

Newspaper use was lowest for the home space, with less than 40% of the sample reporting use in the moderate to high categories (3-5). This was surprising, since we had hypothesized that newspapers would be very useful in helping recent arrivals get settled into their new homes. However, "advertising use" made up much of the difference with 53% reporting "some" to "heavy" use of advertising in conjunction with home concerns. Advertising and newspaper stories both contributed information about the neighborhood and were used almost equally (47% consulting advertising and 49% consulting newspaper stories).

A similar pattern holds for leisure concerns with newspaper stories consulted by 57% while almost 51% consulted advertising. Other "sources", particularly co-workers and associates provided much of the information desired

TABLE 1

DISLOCATION CONCERNS BY USE PATTERN
(Percentages)

	Never Use	Rarely Use	Sometimes Use	Fairly Often Use	Very Often Use
Home Concerns					
Other People	5.0	15.4	25.9	33.8	19.9
Newspaper Stories	36.8	24.4	16.4	14.4	8.0
Advertising	29.5	17.5	19.5	19.5	14.0
Neighborhood Concerns					
Other People	11.4	27.9	30.8	23.4	6.5
Newspaper Stories	26.9	24.4	24.9	15.9	8.0
Advertising	30.8	22.4	21.9	15.9	9.0
Community Concerns					
Other People	5.5	19.9	32.8	30.8	10.9
Newspaper Stories	14.4	22.9	31.3	21.9	9.5
Advertising	25.5	25.0	22.5	17.5	9.5
Work Concerns					
Other People	2.5	7.6	23.3	36.0	31.5
Newspaper Stories	31.0	25.4	23.4	12.7	7.6
Advertising	38.1	23.9	19.8	9.6	8.6
Leisure Concerns					
Other People	2.0	12.4	35.3	34.3	15.9
Newspaper Stories	23.4	19.4	34.3	16.9	6.0
Advertising	24.0	25.5	28.0	13.5	9.0

about work. Overall, interpersonal sources were the primary source of information in all areas of concern with newspaper stories and advertising jockeying for second or third position.

Advertising use was highest for home concerns, followed by leisure activities, community and neighborhood concerns. It would appear that the newspaper's information sphere begins with the community, then fans out to much broader concerns. Advertising, on the other hand, focuses on the individual and the home, and people have learned to use it for those concerns. Most newspapers, the Seattle dailies no exception, do not provide the kind of work information on which people can act. The "help-wanted" advertising that might have shown in this area of concern failed to materialize. In part, this may be due to the fact that many were coming into the area with a promise of employment. In some measure, it's a function of coverage.

In many ways, the Seattle dailies do a fine job covering leisure activities -- especially the "weekend" excursion variety. One might have suspected that advertising would have been a prime source of information for those seeking "things" to do (assuming "movers" have that much time on their hands). We suspect that good coverage coupled with the lack of time combined to drop advertising use in this area to a close third trailing "newspaper stories".

Across age groups, the use distribution was most normal for the middle-aged (35-49) with most reporting at least moderate newspaper use, except for the home. The older respondents (50 and over) reported more high use of papers in all areas of concern. This difference was most pronounced from home concerns, where 23% of those 50 and over said they used the paper very often, compared to 6.5% for young adults and 4% for those 35-49.

Young adults, looked at separately, showed similar declining use patterns

for home, neighborhood and work concerns. The model response was for "never" using the paper. The frequencies dropped off steadily across the other use categories.

Only for community and leisure concerns was moderate use ("some") reported more frequently than "never" or "rarely".

General Media Use

The time respondents reported spending with each of the four major media is shown in table 2. The use patterns are slightly higher but very similar to those reported in a number of studies as well as by nationally syndicated media research firms.

What is of interest are the reported differences in media use. We asked respondents to tell us whether they were spending "more" or "less" time with each of the four major media. The big loser is terms of time allocated to the major media is television with almost 30% reporting they now spent less time with the tube than they did at their previous residence. The largest gains were registered for newspapers and radio (31% and 24%, respectively). These findings are quite understandable given the "local" orientations of both newspaper and radio and the eminent substitutability of most television fare.

Of equal interest are the reported differences in advertising use by the relocators. Forty-three percent of our sample reported they were now using newspaper advertising "more" or "a lot more" than previously (Table 2). Radio was a distant second with almost 19% reporting more use. Only 6% reported using magazine advertising "more" while 13% reported using television advertising "more" or "a lot more".

Further exploring the large differences in newspaper advertising use, we found that over 80% of those claiming greater advertising use, used newspaper

TABLE 2

GENERAL MEDIA USE
(Percentages)

	Newspapers	Magazines	Television	Radio
None	16.1	24.2	20.6	15.7
5 to 30 minutes	51.3	48.5	9.5	18.2
31 to 60 minutes	23.6	17.2	19.6	16.7
61 to 90 minutes	4.0	3.2	9.0	5.6
91 to 120 minutes	3.5	5.6	18.1	14.1
Over 120 minutes	1.5	1.0	23.1	29.8

REPORTED DIFFERENCES IN MEDIA USE

(Percentages)

	Newspapers	Magazines	Television	Radio
A Lot More	11.4	6.0	5.0	7.0
More	19.9	14.9	13.4	16.9
Same	43.8	61.2	52.2	57.2
Less	17.9	14.4	22.9	12.4
A Lot Less	7.9	3.5	6.5	6.5

REPORTED DIFFERENCES IN ADVERTISING USE BY MEDIUM
(Percentages)

	Newspapers	Magazines	Television	Radio
A Lot More	13.9	-0-	1.5	2.5
More	28.9	6.0	11.4	16.0
Same	45.3	76.5	68.9	63.5
Less	7.0	13.0	10.4	10.5
A Lot Less	5.0	4.5	8.0	8.0

advertising to "learn about stores in the neighborhood". (Table 3). Also important was "price comparisons between neighborhood stores" (79%) and "locating stores and finding out about hours and the availability of credit" (7[illegible]. Sixty-five percent reported advertising use "comparing" neighborhood store prices with stores in their former neighborhoods. The classified ads were mentioned by 59%, with 56% reporting they used the classified to buy needed items.

It appears that there is a good deal of "hard" information in most retail advertising that is useful to the consumer in ways that many take for granted. Finding stores, comparing prices, learning about credit, etc., are fairly common consumer behaviors that become especially visible under conditions of dislocation. It seems evident that the relocator is using newspaper advertising in a very systematic and purposeful way.

Summary

Our preliminary results clearly indicate that dislocation represents a critical juncture when people's need for and use of the newspaper is at one of its highest levels. It is also readily apparent that readers do not make the traditional distinctions between "news" and "advertising" content that professionals are loathe to relinquish. Our data strongly suggest that readers seek "content" that meets their needs as consumers, citizens, job-hunters, homeowners, part-time tourists, etc., when such information is available. In short, the newspaper might do well to redefine its marketing concept from the packaging of "news" in and around "all that advertising" to providing "information" which people can use beyond cocktail banter. It would appear that "useful" information-- at least to the consumer-- can be defined as information on which behavior can be based.

Further research is certainly desirable to identify areas of import to the

TABLE 3

RELOCATORS "GREATER" USE OF NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING BY AREA OF USE
(Percentages)

To learn about stores in the neighborhood	81.9
To compare prices of stores in the neighborhood	79.3
To locate stores, find out about hours, credit	74.7
To get coupons, find bargains	67.0
To compare prices of neighborhood stores with those of previous residence	64.9
Use classified to buy	55.9
Entertainment (movies, TV schedules, things to do)	29.4
Use classified to sell	2.9

newspaper's general audience. We suspect that there are many "content" areas that could be developed by probing everyday "concerns" that are not now adequately covered or if covered, are not being covered in a way that permits the reader to evaluate their utility to his or her own life. Advertisers too, need to take a long and sober view of their product to assess its utility to the consumer faced with umpteen brand choices and few serious standards to evaluate individual brand merits.

The problem of the 18-34 year-old non-reader still persists. Under conditions of dislocation, they <u>are</u> using the newspaper. However, they are approaching the status of an endangered species as part of the newspaper's continuing audience.

We suspect that part of the problem is content-based. If young adults are using the newspaper as a resettling guide during dislocation, why aren't they using the paper on a continuing basis? While our analysis of the data is not yet complete, we suspect that there isn't sufficient content of continuing interest to recruit them as subscribers or to induce regular readership. Further research and additional analysis is needed to address that question.

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